

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 11. (canceled).

12. (currently amended): A radiation image information reading apparatus for two-dimensionally reading information representing at least characters and an image carried by a stimuable phosphor sheet which is being fed by a feed system, comprising:

a reading unit for reading the information from said stimuable phosphor sheet;

a feed system for feeding the stimuable phosphor sheet to said reading unit;

a cleaning mechanism disposed in said feed system upstream of said reading unit;

said cleaning mechanism comprising:

a housing surrounding a portion of said feed system; and

an air suction unit for pressurizing an interior space of said housing with respect to an external atmosphere and providing an air flow which travels in a direction from one edge of the stimuable phosphor sheet towards another edge of the stimuable phosphor sheet, for preventing dust particles from being attached to surfaces of said stimuable phosphor sheet.

13. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said housing has an air inlet for introducing air into said housing and an air outlet for

drawing and discharging air introduced from said air inlet, whereby dust particles on the stimuable phosphor sheet in said housing can be guided by air introduced from said air inlet toward said air outlet and then discharged from said housing from said air outlet.

14. (currently amended): A radiation image information reading apparatus for two-dimensionally reading information representing at least characters and an image carried by a stimuable phosphor sheet which is being fed by a feed system, comprising:

- a reading unit for reading the information from said stimuable phosphor sheet;
- a feed system for feeding the stimuable phosphor sheet to said reading unit;
- a cleaning mechanism disposed in said feed system upstream of said reading unit;
- said cleaning mechanism comprising:

- a housing surrounding a portion of said feed system; and

- a brush roller assembly with two brush rollers disposed in said housing, one of said brush rollers being in contact with a first surface of the stimuable phosphor sheet which is being fed by the feed system and another of said brush rollers being in contact with a second surface of the stimuable phosphor sheet, said second surface being opposite said first surface.

15. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising:

dust removing means disposed in said housing and held in contact with at least a tip end of said brush roller assembly, for removing dust particles from the tip end of said brush roller assembly.

16. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said brush roller assembly comprising:

upstream and downstream brush roller pairs disposed in a spaced interval in the direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed;

said cleaning mechanism further comprising:

drive means for rotating said upstream brush roller pair in a direction which is the same as said direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed, and rotating said downstream brush roller pair in a direction which is opposite to said direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed.

17. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said drive means comprises:

a single drive source for rotating said upstream and downstream brush roller pairs.

18. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said drive means comprises:

a drive source for rotating said upstream brush roller pair at a speed higher than the speed at which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed.

19. (original): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said cleaning mechanism further comprises:

a flow path for circulating air through said housing.

20. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the air flow contacts said first surface of the stimuable phosphor sheet and returns along and contacts said second surface of the stimuable phosphor sheet.

21. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the direction of the air flow is perpendicular to a feeding direction of said stimuable phosphor sheet.

22. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising air flow generating means for generating an air flow in a longitudinal direction from one end of said brush roller assembly towards another end of said brush roller assembly.

23. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said air flow travels along and contacts a first surface of said stimuable phosphor sheet and returns along and contacts a second surface of said stimuable phosphor sheet, said second surface being opposite said first surface.

24. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus for two-dimensionally reading information representing at least characters and an image carried by a stimuable phosphor sheet which is being fed by a feed system, comprising:

- a reading unit for reading the information from said stimuable phosphor sheet;
- a feed system for feeding the stimuable phosphor sheet to said reading unit;
- a cleaning mechanism disposed in said feed system upstream of said reading unit;
- said cleaning mechanism comprising:

a housing surrounding a portion of said feed system; and

a brush roller assembly disposed in said housing in contact with a surface of said stimuable phosphor sheet which is being fed by the feed system,

wherein said brush roller assembly comprises upstream and downstream brush roller pairs disposed in a spaced interval in a direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed; and

said cleaning mechanism further comprising drive means for rotating said upstream brush roller pair in a direction which is the same as said direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed, and rotating said downstream brush roller pair in a direction which is opposite to said direction in which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed.

25. (new): A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said drive means comprises:

a single drive source for rotating said upstream and downstream brush roller pairs.

26. (new) A radiation image information reading apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said drive means comprises:

a drive source for rotating said upstream brush roller pair at a speed higher than the speed at which said stimuable phosphor sheet is fed.